

Order for Blessing A Departing Service Member

The following liturgy is offered as an example of what might be done in a service of worship to recognize the departure of a service member who is leaving for an extended period of active military service. It is intended for use following the sermon or at another time during worship when life passages are recognized.

Introduction

Pastor: Beloved, occasionally in the life of our church it is necessary to say farewell to those who must leave us. Today we bid farewell to [Name], a member of our church family who is departing for an extended period of active duty in the service of our country. We want to recognize this occasion by sending [him/her] forth with our blessing.

(The service member is asked to come forward.)

Words of Assurance

Pastor (to departing service member): [Name], as you prepare to leave us, we want to assure you of our love and support, and to offer you our blessing. There are also several things we hope you will remember while you are gone.

(The following three sections may be led by the pastor, elders, the service member's former church school teachers or youth leaders, or others who have been influential in the person's spiritual formation.)

Know that you are never alone. Remember the words of the Psalmist, who said: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Ps. 46:1)." No matter where you go or what you experience, God is with you.

Never forget who and whose you are. First and foremost, you are a Christian. You are part of God's family and part of this church family. Be proud of who you are, and do your best to live up to your high calling as a follower of Jesus Christ. And on those occasions when you fall short, be assured that God's love for you never fails.

Finally, know that our prayers will accompany you. Though you will be absent from us, we will hold you in our hearts. [We will be here for your family while you are gone.] And we will be here for you when you return.

Pledge of Support

Pastor (to congregation): You have heard these words of assurance. Do you, [Name's]

church family, pledge to support [him/her] with your love and your prayers [and will you care for his/her family] as [he/she] offers [his/her] service to our country?

People: We pledge our support.

(Optional – At this point in the liturgy the service member may be presented with a symbol of the congregation's support. This may be a cross pendant or other small item that the service member may easily carry with him/her. If such a presentation is made, it can be done by the pastor or by another officer of the church using the following or similar words.)

Presentation

Presenter: [Name], as you leave us, we want to offer this token of our covenant with you. We hope you will keep it with you as a continual reminder that, wherever you are, you are part of our church family and we care about you.

(At this time, the pastor may invite the service member's family and other persons in the congregation to come forward and surround the service member. A laying on of hands may be done as the following or a similar prayer of blessing is offered.)

Prayer of Blessing

Pastor: Let us pray. Gracious God, we ask your blessing upon [Name] as [he/she] leaves us to serve our country. Watch over [him/her], protect [him/her], and assure [him/her] of your abiding presence in every situation. Grant [him/her] strength and courage to overcome every trial and temptation. Grant [him/her] the peace of knowing that there is nothing that can ever separate [him/her] from your love. We now send [him/her] forth with our blessing and with our prayer for yours. Amen.

Benediction

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God, and of Jesus Christ our Savior: and the blessing of Almighty God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

(All may return to their places.)